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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 001132

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: SPECULATION ABOUT NIGER DELTA AMNESTY
CONDITIONS

REF: A. ABUJA 1102

[1](#)B. ABUJA 601

[1](#)C. ABUJA 493

[1](#)D. ABUJA 586

[1](#)E. LAGOS 191

[1](#)F. LAGOS 190

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Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. The Government of Nigeria's Council of State (an official advisory body including, inter alia, serving Governors, the President, VP, former Heads of State and other senior officials) will meet on June 25 to discuss terms for a possible amnesty offer to Niger Delta "militants," including training, rehabilitation and resettlement. Rivers Governor Amaechi told Ambassador on June 22 that Minister of Interior General Godwin Abbe is holding discussions with select "militants" on amnesty. According to Amaechi, the Council of State will have the final say, but he expects there will be no request for international assistance/participation in the amnesty process. Despite no official word from the Presidency regarding the content of the proposed amnesty offer, the media has begun to speculate on possible terms and participants in the negotiations. Nigeria-focused online publication Sahara Reporters carried a story on June 20, in which it purports to have obtained a copy of a secret document that allegedly outlines President Yar'Adua's proposed amnesty plan. The document calls for amnesty for all "militants," including those undergoing criminal prosecution (Note: this contradicts Yar'Adua's earlier explicit statements that those who have committed criminal acts must be held accountable), stipulates that militants would have 60-75 days to express their desire for amnesty to the governor, and recommends that upon enactment of amnesty the Nigerian Navy should be empowered to end oil bunkering (Comment: the irony of this charge being given to a service which itself has been implicated in large scale bunkering was not lost on many observers), and the Joint Task Force (JTF) empowered to control the proliferation of light arms. Nigerian newspaper This Day quoted a Dow Jones Newswire interview recently with a JTF area commander in which the commander stated that the military is engaging in direct

disarmament talks with the "militants." Defense Headquarters denied this claim (though FonMin told the Ambassador June 22 that JTF elements were talking to "selected" militants). Sahara Reporters also carried the names on the reported list found at "militant" leader Tom Polo's Camp 5 during a May 15 JTF raid. The list reportedly includes the Vice President, Minister of Special Duties, former Delta Governor Ibori and other former governors, and former Chief of Army Staff Azazi, among others. We note that Tom Polo's "acceptance" (whether genuine or not -- see ref A) of amnesty may have encouraged the GON to finally set amnesty terms. Meanwhile, back in the Delta, fighting continues. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Rivers State Governor Rotimi Amaechi told Ambassador on June 22 that the Council of State will meet on June 25 to discuss terms of the amnesty, including training, rehabilitation and resettlement. According to Amaechi, the Council will have the final say on whether the international community will be asked to participate in or observe the terms of the amnesty; however, he expects there will be no such request made. Amaechi told Ambassador that Minister of Interior General Godwin Abbe is representing the GON in discussions with the "militants" over amnesty.

13. (SBU) Meanwhile, given the lack of official information on the amnesty package, the Nigerian press has begun to speculate on terms and conditions. Online publication Sahara Reporters maintained in a June 20 article that it has obtained a copy of the secret document which allegedly forms the basis of President Yar'Adua's proposed amnesty plan. The document is reportedly based on the report of the amnesty committee set up by the President in April to prepare a framework for amnesty and disarmament, demobilization and re-integration (DDR). The site did not publish the full text

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of the document, but rather a synopsis of main points.

13. (SBU) Main points reportedly contained in the amnesty document include:

TERMS OF AMNESTY

-- The Constitution empowers the President to grant pardon to any person concerned/convicted of any offense, including those who have not been formally prosecuted. Beyond amnesty, the President has the authority to grant a reprieve. This includes "militant" leader and arms dealer Henry Okah (currently on trial) and his associates.

-- All categories of "militants," including those undergoing criminal prosecution, should be granted amnesty. The document reportedly points out that "apart from encouraging the combatants to reconcile with the society, amnesty also avoids expensive prosecutions." (Comment: This directly contradicts Yar'Adua's earlier public statements that amnesty will be available only to those who have not committed violent crimes. End Comment.)

-- State governors should compile the list of "militants" seeking amnesty. There will be a period of 60-75 days for "militants" to state their desire to seek amnesty.

-- The President should make a public proclamation (a draft of which was reportedly contained in the document Sahara Reporters obtained) regarding the amnesty package. The document reportedly notes the importance of "perception management" to influence the hearts and minds of militants and the general public through the use of posters, jingles, town hall meetings and websites.

DISARMAMENT AND DEMOBILIZATION

-- The document reportedly maintains that disarmament and demobilization require the severance of all sources of arms procurement, noting the correlation between Niger Delta armed conflict and oil bunkering. The panel reportedly stressed the need, upon granting of amnesty, for the Nigerian Navy to

be empowered to stop bunkering and the Joint Task Force (JTF) to control the proliferation of light arms.

-- A media campaign, including NGOs and religious bodies, should be carried out to engage leaders and the public.

-- The GON should create an Inter-agency Coordinating Center at Enugu, defining the role of each participating agency and seeking the support of the United Nations.

-- Disarmament should be defined as the return of arms for rehabilitation and freedom from prosecution. No other compensation should be offered, and the concept of "arms for money" should not/not be entertained. Screening points to process surrendering "militants" should be set up in each of the Delta states.

REINTEGRATION

-- Reintegration should overlap with long-term peace building initiatives, with some activities starting in the early stages of the peace process. The framework for reintegration should be prepared to handle the rehabilitation of 20,000 ex-"militants" for a projected period of three months.

-- The GON was reportedly advised to expedite action on the Local Content Bill in the National Assembly. The bill would mandate the use of Nigerian workers and Nigerian source materials in the petroleum sector, presumably increasing employment in the region.

¶4. (C) Nigerian newspaper This Day reported on June 21 that the Nigerian Army began disarmament talks with the "militant" groups on June 20. The paper quoted Colonel Usman Yusuf, an area commander for the JTF, in an interview with Dow Jones Newswires, as saying the JTF is in contact with three groups in Elem, Minama and Kula (presumably within the Kalabari Kingdom, which is reportedly within Yusuf's area of command).

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Yusuf maintained he was discussing the "conditions to drop their weapons and how to collect" them. (Note: Defense Headquarters Spokesman, however, told AirATT on June 22 that the military is not/not holding talks with the militants.)

¶5. (SBU) Sahara Reporters also listed the names reportedly contained in the list found by the JTF during its May 15 raid on "militant" Tom Polo's Camp 5 near Warri in Delta State. The list reportedly names those involved with Tom Polo's operations and illegal bunkering. Sahara Reporters maintains the list includes: Vice President Goodluck Johnathan, Delta Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan, Minister of State for Niger Delta Affairs Godsway Orubebe, former Delta Governor James Ibori, former Bayelsa Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, former Secretary to the Delta State Government Ovie Omo-Agege, and former Chief of Army Staff Owey Azazi.

¶6. (C) COMMENT. While we note that President Yar'Adua promised the terms of amnesty "within a week" when he established the Amnesty Committee this past April, Tom Polo's "acceptance" (whether genuine or not in the first instance) may have lit the fire necessary to push the GON finally to set amnesty terms. That said, our overall sense is that the events of the past week have not brought us any closer to a workable amnesty proposal. Chris Ekiyor, President of the Ijaw Youth Council, told Lagos Poloff June 23 that Tom Polo was no longer willing to engage in talks about amnesty as a result of the recent offensive against his camp. Ekiyor added that his own sense was that the GON was unlikely to offer a sufficient amnesty to draw in enough of the key "militant" leaders. In addition, the so-called "militants" are split all over the place on what to do on amnesty, causing some of them to argue with each other. Meanwhile, the JTF continues its offensive, and attacks by "militants" on oil facilities continue. End comment.

¶7. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

